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ABSTRACT

Part of a basic training series, this booklet describes creating a Reading Coaches (tm) session based on the simple concept of reading good books with children while engaging them in conversation about the book. The booklet notes that exemplary practices found in the SLICE-CORPS program (an AmeriCorps program) were synthesized to develop the Reading Coach model. After an introduction and a list of the core principles of the Reading Coaches program, the booklet describes the three steps of the student intake process, and the roles and responsibilities of Reading Coaches and Reading Coach Facilitators. The booklet then describes each of the Reading Coaches phases in creating a session plan: Coaching Data (documenting the book shared during the coaching session); the "before reading" phase (introducing the book and identifying target words); the "during reading" phase (building oral vocabulary and prediction questions); the "after reading" phase (presenting conversation questions and follow-up activities); and the comment section (providing feedback to the facilitator to improve session plans). (RS)

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Creating A Session

ED 417 391

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Reading Coaches ™

Basic Training Series

CS013128

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This training series is dedicated to

Jeanne DeVine

Whose professionalism and creativity
Provided the foundation for
Reading Coaches™, USA

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Introduction

In the fall of 1996, President Bill Clinton proposed a bold initiative to ensure that all children learn to read at grade level by the fourth grade. The President designated the new course of action as the **America Reads Challenge**. He cited one program in the nation as an example of what we, as a country, are capable of accomplishing. That program is the highly successful **SLICE•CORPS** in Simpson County, KY.

Between 1995 and 1997, **SLICE•CORPS** earned a national reputation as one of the most effective AmeriCorps programs in the nation. The exemplary practices found in **SLICE•CORPS** have been synthesized by SouthEast Service Academy to develop the Reading Coaches™ model. The Reading Coaches™ model offers one of the most effective and highly adaptable strategies for supporting children growth as readers. Like so many good ideas, Reading Coach™ is based on a simple concept: reading good books with children while engaging them in conversation about the book.

Core Principles

The Reading Coaches model is based upon six core principles:

1. **Reading ability** is the single most important factor influencing school success.
2. **Early intervention** in reading provides a lasting impact on student achievement.
3. **One-on-one sessions** best meet the individual needs of student.
4. **Session intensity and duration** directly correlate with increases in student reading achievement.
5. **Ongoing Training** supports the development and success of individuals serving as Reading Coaches.
6. **Student Screening** with a valid assessment instrument establishes need, baseline scores, and a basis for evaluating improvement.

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Student Intake

The student intake process involves three steps: student referral, selection, and placement.

Referral

- Teachers refer students who meet the following criteria:
  - Students are believed to be at least one reading level below grade level.
  - Students have parental permission to participate.

Selection

- Referred students are tested with the Basic Reading Inventory (BRI) (Johns, 1997).
- Students who score one or more reading levels below their grade level are eligible.
  If the number of students qualifying exceeds the number who can be served, then students are selected based on grade level: 1) Second Grade, 2) Third Grade, and 3) First Grade.

Placement

- In consultation with the classroom teacher, students are scheduled for coaching sessions.
- Trained volunteers are paired with students, and the coaching sessions begin.

Student Profile

- Student ages range from six to nine years of age.
- More than half of qualifying students is nonreaders.
- Typically, qualifying students have lost enthusiasm for taking risks in large group situations.
- Even though they are behind in reading, qualifying students are **bright** and **possess potential.**

Roles And Responsibilities

In the first year of a program the Reading Coach (RC) Facilitator may have to both prepare and present the session plans. In the long run, for the program to "get the biggest bang for the buck," a traditional volunteer should fill the role of the Reading Coach.

RC Facilitator Roles

Reading Coach Facilitators are paraprofessional educators who have received specialized training in the Reading Coaches™ Model. Although they come from diverse backgrounds and may be called by various titles (i.e., AmeriCorps Member, Reading Assistant, Title I Aide), they embrace a common belief in the importance of sharing books with children. The Reading Coaches™ approach is simple; however, the process is demanding. To ensure an effective session is presented, the RC Facilitator must devote a significant amount of time, energy, and creativity.

RC Facilitator Responsibilities

The responsibilities of a RC Facilitator include:

- Establishing a positive environment
- Recruiting Reading Coaches
- Training Reading Coaches
- Creating Session Plans
- Supervising Coaching Sessions
- Maintaining Records

Reading Coach Roles

Reading Coaches work one-on-one with targeted students to foster their growth as readers. Coaches are trained in the use of field tested strategies. These strategies have been shown to be highly effective in meeting the needs of individual learners. Reading Coaches and RC Facilitators work hand-in-hand in creating positive, literacy-rich environments where all children ean will learn.

Reading Coach Responsibilities

- Be on time (10 to 15 minutes before session
- Review the Session Plan and to read the book prior to the session
- Cooperate with Staff and other volunteers
- Follow the Session Plan
- Be enthusiastic in all aspects of their coaching
- Offer suitable praise
- To encourage students to take educational risks
- Complete the comment section of the Session Plan
- Phone well in advance if for any reason they will miss or be late
- Follow school rules, especially regarding
  - Signing in and out
  - Parking
  - Confidentiality

Creating A Session Plan

The Session Plan form is divided into five distinct sections with each serving a unique function:

1. Coaching Data
2. Before Reading Phase
3. During Reading Phase
4. After Reading Phase
5. Comments Section

Coaching Data

PURPOSE: To document the book shared during the Coaching Session and provide beneficial information to the Reading Coach™ presenting the Session Plan

Basic Information

STUDENT- The first initial and last name of the student.

COACH - The name of the person who presents the Session Plan.

DATE - The date the session is conducted.

SCHOOL - The name of the school.

FACILITATOR - The Reading Coach™ Facilitator who prepares the Session Plan.

BOOK TITLE - The title of the book.

AUTHOR - The first and last name of the author.

ILLUSTRATOR - The first and last name of the illustrator.

NUMBER OF TEXT PAGES - The number of "Text Pages," not counting the title page or pages that contain illustrations only.

Book Selection

The **first critical step** in the planning process is the **selection of a book.** The type of book selected will influence each of the subsequent decisions in the planning process. The RC Facilitator considers three major factors when selecting a book for a coaching session: **book level*, interest level, and book length**.

* Reading level is one of many criteria used to determine book level

Book Levels

The category of the book selected is circled: IND INS R-A

- IND (Independent) - means the student knows 99% of the words in the book.
- INS (Instructional) - means the student knows 90% of the words in the book.
- R-A (Read-Along) - means the student knows less than 90% of the words in the book.

If the RC Facilitator thinks that the student will recognize 100% of the text in a given book, the book is categorized at the Independent Level (IND) for that student. If the prediction for student text recognition is 90% or more, the book is classified at the Instructional Level (INS) for that student. If the RC facilitator estimates that text recognition is less than 90%, then that book is classified at the Read Along (R-A) level for the student.

These three categories are child specific, not book specific. For example, the book Brown Bear, Brown Bear What Do You See? might be an IND book for Mike, an INS book for Brande, and a R-A book for Jose. Furthermore, the same book may be a different level for the same student over time. For example, in the fall a book is R-A (read-along) for Shermika. By the end of the school year, Shermika may be reading it as an INS (instructional) book or, perhaps, as an IND (independent) book.

The RC Facilitator makes an educated guess to determine the book level for a student at a particular point in time. This prediction is based upon knowledge of the student gleaned by (1) personal observation of the coaching sessions, and (2) careful reading the Reading Coach comments section on the session plan. Hence, the more the RC Facilitator knows about a student, the better his/her ability to select appropriate books. The facilitator makes this decision clear to the Reading Coach by circling one of the three book levels (IND, INS, R-A) on the session plan.

Field experience has shown that over half of the children who qualify will be non-readers. Children who are non-readers need books that they can read independently. To have a chance at success, they must be exposed to 3 types of books: wordless picture books, books that they have heard repeatedly and memorized, and flipbooks -- books that the children have made themselves. See appendix X for instructions on making a flipbook.

Interest Level

When selecting a book, the RC Facilitator must consider the appeal of the content to the student. Among the considerations to choose from are:

Age-appropriate: How do children of the student's age respond to this content? (e.g. Patricia Palacco's book, Pink and Say, about the Civil War may be too complex for second graders.)

Student-focused: Based on your personal knowledge of the child's interests and skills, will he/she respond favorably to the book? (e.g. if you know the student is going to be visiting his/her grandfather, then a good choice might be Granddaddy's Place by Helen Griffith)

Curriculum-based: Can the book be connected to classroom activities? (e.g., If students are studying the ocean, you could select a book about fish like Swimmy by Leo Lionni.)

Celebrations: Are there any holidays, special events, or seasonal themes to celebrate? (e.g. On the student's birthday, you could select Eric Carle's book, The Secret Birthday Message.)

Book Length

When choosing a story, the RC Facilitator must consider the length of a book. The amount of time required to complete a book should take between 10 to 12 minutes, regardless of the book level selected. If it takes more than 12 minutes, perhaps, the book was too long or the reading strategies were inappropriate. If it takes less than 10 minutes, consider longer and/or more difficult books. Remember, the majority of the books selected should be one-day books: "do-able" in one coaching session.

Note: Every week select one book from each of the three categories.

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Before Reading

The Before Reading phase includes an introduction to the book and a review of target words. These activities set the stage for the entire coaching session. This process must pique the student's interest and familiarize him/her with words he/she will encounter while reading.

Introducing the Book

PURPOSE: To create excitement and interest in the literature

The RC Facilitator creates this short but exciting introduction to the book. During the session, the Reading Coach uses this dynamic beginning to invite the student "into the book." The introduction should not exceed two minutes. The introduction incorporates three major components: 1) the five senses, 2) drama, and 3) the use of a prop. Drama means the activity should be a "wow" activity. Whatever introduction, it should create a sense of mystery, imagination, and anticipation.

Five Senses

Typically, a book is introduced to a child by a discussion about the cover. Fortunately, the RC Facilitator has the opportunity to personally invite the child into the book through the use of an interactive activity. The RC Facilitator creates an activity by building it around one or more of the five senses -- hearing, sight, smell, taste, or touch.

Drama

The Reading Coach uses a sense of mystery to build the interest and imagination of the student. The best Reading Coaches bring drama and energy to this activity.

Use of a Prop

The Reading Coach uses a prop, supplied by the RC facilitator, to heighten student interest. For example, a session plan could ask the Reading Coach™ to put an object in a bag and have the student guess about what might be hidden inside. Clues may be given to the student help him/her be successful.

Example Introduction

Harold and the Purple Crayon by Crockett Johnson

Summary: A little picture story in which a small boy out for a walk – happily with a crayon in his hand-draws himself some wonderful adventures.

Place a purple crayon in a brown paper bag. Give the closed bag to the child and ask him/her to guess what you have in the bag. You may provide progressively helpful hints ranging from, "It is round," to "It

makes pictures." During the guessing process, have the child reach into the bag to touch the crayon. When the child guesses crayon, have him/her guess the color of the crayon. After the crayon is revealed, tell them you are going to read a story about a little boy named Harold who took a walk with a purple crayon.

Target Words

PURPOSE: To increase the student's reading vocabulary

Target words are a set of words to be emphasized during the session. These words are selected from the text of the book for the day. Target words are words that the student does not know. These words can be categorized as **function words, high frequency words,** and **high repetition words.**

Function Words

The 13 function words make up 25% of written language. During the first week of coaching, students are given a short test to determine whether or not they know the function words. The first words selected as target words are those function words that were miscalled on the test. The RC facilitator continues to list as a target word any miscalled function word until it is mastered by the student.

High Frequency Nouns

The next target words to be emphasized are chosen from the high frequency noun list (Appendix B). These nouns must occur in the text of the book, and should be words the student does not know.

High Repetition Words

If the book does not contain high frequency nouns, or they have been mastered, choose words that are frequently repeated throughout the story.

Note: RC Facilitators may want to use sticky notes to mark the pages where target words are found.

During Reading

The During Reading Phase continues to engage the student as a full reading partner. As in the previous phase, vocabulary is emphasized and the student is encouraged to be an imaginative, thoughtful reader.

Building Oral Vocabulary

PURPOSE: To increase the student's oral vocabulary through the introduction of words found in or suggested by the literature

Before the student can add a word to his/her reading vocabulary, he/she must own it as part of his/her oral vocabulary. To promote this acquisition, the RC Facilitator identifies two or three "beautiful language" words found in the text of the chosen book. These words are used to build the student's oral vocabulary and to raise his/her level of conversation and understanding.

Beautiful Language words are not introduced to the student before he/she reads the story, nor are students expected to recognize them during the reading of the story. When the word is encountered in the text, the Reading Coach treats the discovery as a "teachable moment." The Reading Coach and the student talk about the word in a natural way, discussing the word's meaning and its use in the text. The student should be engaged in a dialogue that allows for the exchange of information. These words are not necessarily words that are difficult to pronounce. Some of the criteria used in the identification of these words are:

Challenging

Select words that challenge the student's intellect. For example, the word "stupendous" found in Sam and the Tigers, by Julius Lester, provides a useful synonym for future writing done by the student.

Interesting

Choose words that will pique the student's curiosity. For example, the word "rumpus" in Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are.

Poetic

Identify words that sound appealing, perhaps ones that use alliteration or onomatopoeia. For example, the word "sputter" as found in Strega Nona, by Tomie de Paola, could be selected as a poetic word.

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Scientific

Find words that refer to technical aspects of the world. For example, in Swimmy, by Leo Lionni, the word "anemone" would be considered a scientific word.

Foreign Words

Select words that are unique to a particular language or culture. For example, David Small in Ruby Mae Has Something to Say, uses the word "nada."

It is important for the RC Facilitator to mark the page on which the word appears. A sticky note on that page is a useful reminder to the Reading Coach to talk about the word with the student. Students eventually begin to anticipate these markers as coaching sessions continue.

Prediction Questions

PURPOSE: To keep the student actively involved in the book by providing an opportunity for the student to use his/her imagination.

RC Facilitators will pre-select two or three places in the text as points of entry for asking prediction questions. These points of entry provide opportunities for the student to become actively engaged in the story.

Prediction questions should be asked at points in the story where there is an unexpected outcome, a suspenseful moment, or an action-packed turning point. These invitations are offered to the student by asking very simple questions such as, "What do you think is going to happen next?" These questions should activate the student's imagination and create a desire to turn the page. Remember a student can never be wrong when we ask for his/her opinion.

Unexpected Outcome

Prediction is a guess about what is going to happen next. For example, In The Wolf's Chicken Stew, the part where the wolf is about to grab his prey is an ideal entry point for a prediction question. We expect the wolf to grab the chicken; we do not expect him to decide to fatten her up instead.

Suspenseful Moment

At the point in the story when the wolf arrives at the chicken's house to enjoy his meal, the author uses specific vocabulary such as "just about" and "suddenly" to create a suspenseful moment. This is the perfect

entry point for a prediction question.

Turning Point

Another opportunity for a prediction question occurs after the wolf has supper with Mrs. Chicken and her children. By using the phrase, "Awe, shucks, perhaps I'll make the little critters a hundred scrumptious cookies," the author provides a point of entry to ask a question about the wolf's change of heart.

The RC Facilitator should mark the pages with sticky notes to indicate where the prediction questions should be asked. Students often become conscious of these notes and will tell their Reading Coach, "You are supposed to ask me a question here."

After Reading

Following the reading of the book, two activities are planned to bring closure to the session. The student is presented with a series of questions designed to generate a conversation about the book. A brief, doable writing activity follows the conversation as the final part of the session.

Conversation Questions

PURPOSE: To explore with the student through conversation at least five areas that characterize reading comprehension

Conversation continues after the reading of the book by engaging the student in a directed discussion. This is one of, if not the most, critical parts of the session and takes the greatest amount of planning time. Conversation questions are provided to the Reading Coach in a book folder or an attachment to the Session Plan. The student must never perceive this discussion as a test. It is, and must always remain, a conversation.

The set of eight to ten conversation questions emphasizes five comprehension areas including: (1) retelling the story, (2) recalling details, (3) making inferences, (4) making evaluations, and (5) demonstrating word knowledge. An answer and a follow-up accompany each conversation question, serving to keep the conversation alive. Follow-ups do not need to be the same type of question as the initial question. They are usually inference or evaluation in nature.

Retelling the Story (usually 1 question)

Retelling questions require the student to recall a significant part of the story. This activity allows the student to relate a "sense" of the story.

Example: From Strega Nona by Tomie de Paulo
Share with me your favorite part of Strega Nona.
(Answer) Accept any logical answer.
(Follow Up) Can you remember what happened just before your favorite part?
Tell me about this part.

Recalling Details (usually 5 questions)

Detail questions regarding facts, specific details, or explicit information should be used to fuel the conversation. They should explore the story's setting, characters, problem, or resolution.

Example: From Strega Nona by Tomie de Paulo
Find the place in the story when Big Anthony first went to see Strega Nona?
(Answer) Encourage the student to use the book as a resource.
(Follow Up) Would you have wanted to live with Strega Nona? Why or why not?

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Making Inferences (usually 2)

The student is asked to predict an outcome based on setting or character point of view. These questions require the student to reason beyond the text and make reasonable hypothesis.

Example: From Strega Nona by Tomie de Paulo

Why doesn't Strega Nona want Big Anthony the touch the pasta pot?

(Answer) Because it is magic, and he doesn't know how to operate it.

(Follow Up) Suppose you were Strega Nona. What could you have done to make sure that Big Anthony did not touch the pasta pot?

Making Evaluations (usually 1)

The student is asked to predict an outcome based on his/her own life experience, or is encouraged to draw conclusions that draw on prior knowledge.

Example: From Strega Nona by Tomie de Paulo

Assume you had a magic soup pot. Tell me a special thing you would have to do make it work.

(Answer) Encourage imaginative answers.

(Follow Up) If someone like Big Anthony caused it to overflow, what would he have to do to keep it from flooding the town?

Demonstrating Vocabulary Knowledge.

As in the previous phases of the session, the importance of the acquisition of vocabulary is stressed. Students are asked to define words in relationship to their use in the story.

Example: From Strega Nona by Tomie de Paulo

What does "Strega Nona" mean?

(Answer) Grandma Witch.

(Follow Up) What is another book with a witch in it?

Writing Activity

PURPOSE: To connect writing and reading in a meaningful manner.

All writing activities are completed in the student's Opus. The Opus preserves the student's work and provides a source of material for inclusion in the student's portfolio. The activities selected reinforce creative thinking and are "do-able" in the time allotted. The Reading Coach is encouraged to continue his/her conversation with the student and to offer advice and encouragement as the student writes.. Spelling is not corrected during this process. If the student asks for help in spelling a word, the Reading Coach™ may tell the student to "spell it the best you can," or write the word for the student on the white board. **Never spell a word orally for a student.**

At the end of the session, the Reading Coach has the student record his/her Word Bank words in the back of his/her Opus. It is imperative that the words are spelled correctly and be recorded by the student.

Follow-up Activity

Follow-up activities need to be doable in the given time frame (about 5 min.). The child should be encouraged to use his imagination during this activity. (This is not an appropriate time for worksheets).

Example: From Arthur's Teacher Trouble by Marc Brown

Write a post card to Arthur inquiring about how to join his fan club.
(Note: help student with addressing)

A list of words to help generate writing activities can be found in appendix B.

Comment Section

PURPOSE: To provide feedback to the RC Facilitator so that Session Plans might be constantly improved

The comments written here by the Reading Coach are based only on observed behavior. The Reading Coach should include **miscalled words** that the student was expected to call correctly. For example: in The Giant's Stew video, Mike noted that Zack miscalled "sat." The RC Facilitator should use these words as **target words in future sessions.**

The RC Facilitator should also consider **Themes, Areas of Interest, Likes** and **Dislikes** of the student noted by the Reading Coach. For example: Zack definitely expressed a great deal of interest in birthday parties and skating.

The RC Facilitator gains valuable knowledge during the Friday review of the comments written during the week. With this new knowledge, the RC Facilitator can make better selections of books and activities to support the student as a learner and to foster love of literature.

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